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JOAN OF ARC

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editorial

She emerges from the fog of history as if from a dream, a teenage peasant girl in a red dress kneeling before the disinherited Dauphin claiming she is sent by God to save France. Within a year, she is in armour, leading armies, breaking sieges, and crowning a king. Two years after that, she is a prisoner of the enemy, tried for heresy and witchcraft, and burned at the stake in a marketplace in Rouen. In death, she becomes everything but herself: a saint, a symbol, a political weapon, a psychiatric case study ...a box-office icon.

This issue of Ovi history, is not another simple chronicle of those astonishing facts. It is a journey through the fire and the fiction, an attempt to reach the human being at the heart of the inferno, while rigorously examining the layers of myth that have encased her. We follow Joan's trajectory not as a fated parabola but as a seismic and deeply puzzling event, one that disrupted the rigid hierarchies of medieval Europe and continues to reverberate in our modern world often in distorted and dangerous ways.

Our story begins in the obscure village of Domrémy, on the fracturing frontier of a France torn apart by the Hundred Years' War. Here, we meet not the legendary saint-in-waiting, but a devout, illiterate girl of thirteen, who begins to hear voices she attributes to Saint Michael, Saint Catherine, and Saint Margaret. We will walk with her as she transforms these intimate, spiritual experiences into an unshakeable sense of divine mandate, navigating the impossible bureaucratic and military corridors of a patriarchal world to reach Charles VII. We will analyze her shocking military successes, the relief

of Orléans, the swift Loire campaign, the coronation at Reims, not as miraculous fairy tales but as feats of raw charisma, uncanny tactical intuition and potent propaganda. What was it about this girl that made hardened soldiers follow her, and that made her strategic insights so devastatingly effective?

Then inevitably we descend into the darkness, her capture at Compiègne, the brutal year-long political trial in Rouen. Here, the transcripts of her condemnation trial revealing not a passive victim but a razor-sharp intellect often outmanoeuvring her learned interrogators with wit and steadfast faith. We will stand in the square on May 30, 1431, to witness the horror and the courage of her end, an execution designed to erase her completely.

But Joan of Arc could not be erased. Her legacy is where our articles take a critical turn. We dissect the Hollywood myths from the silent film saint to the gritty warrior, examining how each era recreates Joan in its own image, often smoothing out her strangeness and zealotry to fit contemporary narratives of feminism or individual heroism.

We grapple with modern psychological perspectives, including the provocative but reductive theory of a possible bipolar condition or temporal lobe epilepsy, used to explain her visions. While engaging with these clinical lenses, we question their limits: can they capture the totality of her experience, or do they risk diagnosing a medieval mystic with a modern pathology, missing the profound intersection of faith, psychology and culture that she embodied?

Most urgently, we confront the political weaponization of her image. We trace how Joan, a figure who fought for a king but was betrayed by his court, was later resurrected as the ultimate nationalist icon. This journey leads us to the doorstep of Marine Le Pen, the French far-right and even America's MAGA, who have relentlessly co-opted Joan's image distorting her complex story into a symbol of ethno-nationalist purity, anti-immigration sentiment, and xenophobic racism, an irony,

given the medieval concept of France was not one of racial identity, but of allegiance and faith.

This issue of Ovi History, therefore, is a reclamation project. It seeks to separate the young woman from the symbol, the historical actor from the ideological puppet. In the space between the peasant girl of Domrémy and the figure burning on the stake, between the saint and the schizophrenic, between the liberator and the tool of nativists, we may finally glimpse the true, irreducible, and eternally compelling figure of Joan of Arc. ■

STORIES AND NARRATIVES FROM TIME PAST

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The Ovi history eMagazine

Rosa Parks bus boycott

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Editor:
T. Kalamidas

Contact
ovimagazine@yahoo.com

St. Joan of Arc is a national heroine of France, a peasant girl who, believing that she was acting under divine guidance, led the French army in a momentous victory at Orléans that repulsed an English attempt to conquer France during the Hundred Years' War. Captured a year afterward, Joan was burned to death by the English and their French collaborators as a heretic.

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The historical Joan Separating fact from legend in the Maid of Orléans

Few historical figures exist so powerfully at the intersection of documented fact and cultural myth as Joan of Arc (Jeanne d'Arc). To some, she is a divinely inspired saviour of France; to others, a deluded peasant girl manipulated by political forces; to still others, a proto-nationalist, a feminist icon, or a martyr crushed by institutional power. Each image says as much about the interpreter as about Joan herself.

This article argues a clear thesis: Joan of Arc is one of the best-documented non-elite individuals of the Middle Ages, yet our knowledge of her is simultaneously precise and deeply constrained. The abundance of sources, trial records, chronicles, letters, does not grant us psychological certainty or metaphysical answers. Instead, it allows historians to reconstruct her actions, words, and immediate historical impact with unusual clarity, while leaving her inner experience fundamentally opaque.

Separating Joan the historical actor from Joan the symbolic construct requires disciplined attention to primary sources and scepticism toward later embellishments. What follows is an examination of those

sources, what they reliably tell us, and where legend begins to overtake evidence.

Medieval history is notoriously fragmentary, especially when it concerns peasants, women, and adolescents. Joan is extraordinary precisely because she appears suddenly and intensely in the historical record, leaving behind thousands of pages of testimony generated by her enemies and later by her supporters.

The core primary sources fall into three main categories:

1. The Condemnation Trial Transcripts (1431)

2. The Nullification (Rehabilitation) Trial Records (1455–1456)

3. Contemporary Chronicles, letters, and administrative documents

Each category has distinct biases, strengths, and limitations. The historian's task is not to choose which to "believe," but to triangulate among them.

The most important and paradoxically reliable, source for Joan's life is the transcript of her trial for heresy, conducted in Rouen under English occupation.

The trial was politically motivated, legally irregular, and designed to destroy Joan's legitimacy retroactively by discrediting her divine mission. It was overseen by Pierre Cauchon, a pro-English bishop with a vested interest in her condemnation. There was no defence counsel. The verdict was predetermined.

And yet, the transcripts are invaluable.

Why?

- Joan's answers were recorded verbatim, often in question-and-answer form.

- The clerks were trained theologians and legal scribes.

- The English wanted a conviction that would withstand scrutiny, accuracy mattered.

Ironically, the court's obsession with orthodoxy preserved Joan's voice more clearly than that of almost any other medieval peasant.

From the trial, historians can state with high confidence that:

- Joan consistently claimed her mission came from Saint Michael, Saint Catherine, and Saint Margaret.

- She began hearing voices around age 13.

- She insisted on wearing male military clothing, even under threat of death.

- She demonstrated remarkable theological agility, often outmanoeuvring trained clerics.

- She believed her mission came directly from God and refused to submit it to Church authority.

Crucially, Joan never recanted her belief in divine guidance, only her right to wear men's clothing, and even that recantation was coerced and later withdrawn.

What the trial cannot tell us is whether Joan's voices were divine, psychological, neurological, or fabricated. The transcripts tell us what she said, not why she experienced it as true.

Contemporary chroniclers, such as Enguerrand de Monstrelet, Jean Chartier, and the Bourgeois of Paris, provide essential context for Joan's public role, but little insight into her inner life.

These sources confirm that:

- Joan's appearance at court in 1429 caused widespread astonishment.

- Her presence galvanized French morale.

- She played a central role in lifting the Siege of Orléans.

- She accompanied Charles VII to Reims for his coronation.

However, chroniclers often filtered events through political allegiance. Burgundian and English writers minimized her role or portrayed her as a sorceress; French royalist writers emphasized divine favour.

Chronicles help historians establish chronology and public perception, but they rarely offer neutral analysis. Joan appears in them less as a person than as a symbol, either holy or dangerous.

Several letters attributed to Joan survive, including threats sent to the English demanding their departure from France. While some were dictated rather than written by her, linguistic analysis supports their authenticity.

These letters reveal:

- A confident, commanding tone.
- A strong sense of divine authorization.
- Political clarity about English occupation.

In addition, military payrolls, city council records, and royal correspondence confirm her physical presence at key events and her recognized authority within the French command structure.

This matters enormously: Joan was not merely a mascot. She issued orders, negotiated with city leaders, and influenced strategic decisions, even if she was not the sole architect of French victories.

Twenty-five years after Joan's execution, Charles VII authorized a retrial to nullify the original verdict. This proceeding collected testimony from over 100 witnesses, family members, soldiers, villagers and clergy.

These accounts are emotionally rich and detailed, describing Joan's childhood, piety, and conduct. They also restored her reputation officially.

But historians must be cautious.

By 1456:

- Joan was a symbolic asset to the French crown.
- Witnesses had decades to reinterpret events.
- Memory had been shaped by trauma, victory, and hindsight.

The rehabilitation trial is invaluable for reconstructing Joan's early life and character, but it is less reliable for precise facts than the 1431 trial. It tells us how Joan was remembered, not simply how she was.

Stripped of legend, historians can assert the following with strong evidentiary support:

- Joan was a peasant teenager from Domrémy with no formal education.
- She genuinely believed she was divinely commanded to save France.
- She successfully persuaded powerful men to take her seriously.
- She played a decisive psychological and symbolic role in French military resurgence.
- She was captured by Burgundian forces, sold to the English, and executed after a sham trial.
- Her execution was politically motivated, not theologically justified.

These are not minor claims. They alone make Joan extraordinary.

What historians cannot definitively determine includes:

- The nature of Joan's voices.
- Whether her military insight was intuitive, coached, or exaggerated.
- Whether she consciously crafted a persona or simply lived her belief.
- Whether divine intervention played any role beyond human perception.

Attempts to resolve these questions often reveal more about modern values, scepticism, faith, nationalism, feminism, than about Joan herself.

Joan of Arc does not need miracles to justify her place in history. Her significance lies in the collision between belief and power, gender and authority, individual conviction and institutional fear.

The historical Joan is not the plaster saint nor the delusional fanatic. She is something rarer and more unsettling: a young woman whose absolute certainty destabilized a political order and forced that order to destroy her to restore itself.

The archives do not give us certainty about God's voice. They give us certainty about Joan's. And that, in the end, is enough to understand why she still matters. ■

Martyrdom and memory How Joan of Arc became a French national symbol

History rarely preserves individuals as they truly were. Instead, it reshapes them, polishing rough edges, amplifying useful traits, and bending lives into symbols that serve later generations. Few figures illustrate this process more vividly than Joan of Arc, a peasant girl turned military leader, heretic turned saint, and eventually a national icon claimed by wildly different political movements. Joan's transformation from condemned martyr to embodiment of French identity reveals less about the fifteenth century than it does about France's enduring need for symbols of unity, sacrifice, and resistance.

Joan of Arc was not born a symbol. She became one, slowly, deliberately and repeatedly, through trials, retrials, revolutions, and wars that reinterpreted her story to fit new national anxieties.

Joan's execution in 1431 was meant to erase her influence. Tried by an ecclesiastical court loyal to the English and the Burgundians, she was convicted of heresy, witchcraft, and cross-dressing charges designed less to uncover truth than to delegitimize Charles VII, the French king whose coronation Joan had helped secure.

Her death at the stake was a warning: divine voices that challenged authority would not be tolerated. Yet paradoxically, the brutality of her execution ensured that she would not be forgotten. Martyrdom has a way of magnifying memory. Even contemporaries sensed that something had gone wrong. Eyewitnesses reported unease; some English soldiers allegedly feared they had burned a holy woman.

At this stage, Joan was dangerous not because she lived, but because she represented a crack in established power structures: a poor, illiterate woman who claimed divine authority and succeeded where nobles had failed.

Twenty-five years later, political necessity prompted historical revision.

By 1456, Charles VII was firmly established as king, but his legitimacy still rested uneasily on a past intertwined with a condemned heretic. The Rehabilitation Trial was not simply about justice, it was about statecraft. The Church annulled Joan's conviction, declaring her trial corrupt and unjust. She was posthumously cleared of heresy and recognized as a faithful daughter of the Church.

This retrial transformed Joan from liability into asset. No longer a rebel inspired by dangerous visions, she became a victim of English cruelty and ecclesiastical corruption. Importantly, the retrial emphasized her obedience, chastity, and orthodoxy, traits that made her safe to remember.

Yet this version of Joan was already selective. Her defiance, her insistence on personal divine authority, and her challenges to gender norms were softened. Memory was beginning its work.

The French Revolution posed a paradox for Joan of Arc. She was deeply religious, loyal to monarchy, and inspired by divine visions,

hardly an obvious revolutionary heroine. And yet, revolutionaries embraced her.

Why?

Because Joan could be stripped of her sainthood and recast as a patriot of the people. Revolutionary narratives emphasized her peasant origins, her resistance to foreign occupation, and her sacrifice for France, not for king or Church. In this retelling, Joan became a symbol of popular sovereignty, a commoner rising against tyranny.

Statues of saints were torn down, but Joan survived not as a saint, but as a proto-revolutionary figure. Her adaptability was becoming her defining feature. Joan could be anti-English without being pro-monarchy, heroic without being holy.

This period reveals an essential truth: Joan endured because she could be reinvented without breaking.

Joan was officially canonized in 1920 but this was not merely a religious act. It was a deeply political one.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were marked by fierce debates over French identity: secularism versus Catholicism, republicanism versus traditionalism. Joan became a rare figure claimed by both sides. Catholics celebrated her divine mission; republicans admired her patriotism and sacrifice.

The Church's decision to canonize Joan was carefully timed. France had just emerged from World War I, devastated yet victorious. Millions were dead. The nation needed meaning, unity, and moral clarity. Joan, young, pure, self-sacrificing, victorious yet martyred, fit perfectly.

Her canonization consecrated not only her soul, but the idea of France itself as righteous, suffering, and ultimately triumphant.

During World War I, Joan of Arc reached the height of her symbolic power.

She appeared on posters, in sermons, in speeches, and in schoolbooks. She was invoked as the spiritual ancestor of French soldiers defending their homeland against foreign invasion, this time German rather than English. Her image reassured a wounded nation that sacrifice had meaning and that suffering could lead to redemption.

Crucially, Joan's youth and gender mattered. She embodied innocence violated by external aggression, reinforcing narratives of France as a besieged but virtuous nation. Her death validated the suffering of soldiers; her faith sanctified endurance.

By this point, Joan was no longer a historical figure. She was a national myth, adaptable, emotionally potent, and endlessly reusable.

Yet the very malleability that made Joan powerful also makes her troubling.

Joan of Arc has been claimed by monarchists, republicans, Catholics, secularists, conservatives, and extremists. Each finds something useful in her story and discards the rest. Her complexity is often flattened into purity and obedience, erasing the radical aspects of her life: her refusal to submit quietly, her insistence on personal conviction, her challenge to male authority.

The real Joan was uncomfortable. She was stubborn, politically disruptive, and spiritually unmanageable. The symbolic Joan is safe.

This tension raises an uncomfortable question: Do national symbols illuminate history or obscure it?

Joan of Arc became a French national symbol not because history preserved her faithfully, but because memory reshaped her relentlessly. Her martyrdom provided emotional power; her rehabilitation offered legitimacy; revolutions and wars gave her new meanings.

Perhaps the most honest way to honour Joan is not to freeze her as saint or symbol, but to remember her contradictions. She was neither merely holy nor merely patriotic. She was a human being whose conviction collided with power and whose death exposed the anxieties of every generation that followed.

Joan of Arc does not belong to France alone. She belongs to the long, uneasy conversation between memory and history where nations search for meaning, and martyrs are asked to carry far more than they ever chose. ■

January 6th 1412, Joan of Arc is born

St. Joan of Arc is a national heroine of France, a peasant girl who, believing that she was acting under divine guidance, led the French army in a momentous victory at Orléans that repulsed an English attempt to conquer France during the Hundred Years' War. Captured a year afterward, Joan was burned to death by the English and their French collaborators as a heretic. She became the greatest national heroine of her compatriots, and her achievement was a decisive factor in the later awakening of French national consciousness.

Joan was the daughter of a tenant farmer at Domrémy, on the borders of the duchies of Bar and Lorraine. In her mission of expelling the English and their Burgundian allies from the Valois kingdom of France, she felt herself to be guided by the voices of St. Michael, St. Catherine of Alexandria, and St. Margaret of Antioch.

Joan was endowed with remarkable mental and physical courage, as well as a robust common sense, and she possessed many attributes characteristic of the female visionaries who were a noted feature of her time. These qualities included extreme personal piety, a claim to direct communication with the saints, and a consequent reliance upon individual experience of God's presence beyond the ministrations of the priesthood and the confines of the institutional church.

Gender, faith and power Joan of Arc as a Religious and Feminist Figure

Few historical figures sit as uncomfortably and as provocatively at the intersection of faith, gender, and power as Joan of Arc. Canonized as a saint, celebrated as a nationalist hero, and debated endlessly by historians, Joan remains a paradox: a teenage peasant girl who claimed divine guidance, wore men's clothing, led armies, defied clerics, and was executed for heresy, only to be posthumously vindicated.

To read Joan of Arc solely as a pious martyr is to miss the radical nature of her existence. To frame her only as a proto-feminist is to flatten her deeply religious worldview. Joan matters precisely because she resists easy categorization. Her life forces us to confront uncomfortable questions about who gets to speak for God, who controls authority, and what happens when gender norms collide with spiritual conviction.

Joan's claim to authority rested on her visions. From around the age of thirteen, she reported hearing voices, most notably those of Saint Michael, Saint Catherine, and Saint Margaret, who instructed her to sup-

port Charles VII and drive the English from France. In medieval Europe, visions were not inherently suspect; mysticism was woven into religious life, especially among women. Figures like Hildegard of Bingen had claimed divine revelation centuries earlier.

What made Joan dangerous was not that she heard voices but that she acted on them without institutional mediation.

Joan did not retreat into a convent or submit her revelations quietly to male theologians. She demanded an audience with political leaders, insisted on military involvement, and framed her mission as divinely mandated. In doing so, she bypassed the Church's monopoly on interpreting God's will. Her faith was not submissive; it was assertive, personal, and uncompromising.

This was a direct challenge to ecclesiastical authority. If God could speak directly to a teenage girl and if that girl could contradict bishops, generals, and kings then the carefully maintained hierarchy between heaven and earth began to crack.

Joan's choice to wear men's clothing has often been treated as a curiosity or a footnote. In reality, it was central to both her identity and her condemnation.

She wore armour in battle, cropped her hair, and dressed as a man even during imprisonment. At her trial, cross-dressing became one of the main charges levelled against her, cited as a violation of divine law. Yet Joan consistently defended her clothing as necessary, both for practical protection and because God commanded it.

This matters.

In a medieval world where gender roles were divinely sanctioned, clothing was not mere fabric, it was theology. To dress as a man was to disrupt the natural order as defined by Church doctrine. Joan's

clothing blurred the line between male and female authority, especially in warfare, the most masculine of medieval domains.

Importantly, Joan never claimed to be a man. She did not reject her sex; she rejected the limitations imposed upon it. This distinction complicates modern readings of her as transgender or gender-nonconforming in a contemporary sense. Joan's rebellion was not against womanhood but against the assumption that womanhood equalled passivity, silence, and obedience.

Joan's trial was not a neutral search for truth; it was a political execution disguised as a theological inquiry. Conducted by pro-English clergy, the trial focused obsessively on her obedience to the Church, to men, to authority.

Again and again, Joan was asked whether she would submit her visions to ecclesiastical judgment. Again and again, she resisted. Her most famous answer "God must be served first" was devastatingly simple and deeply subversive.

In medieval society, obedience was gendered. Women were expected to obey fathers, husbands, priests. Joan obeyed none of them, only God, as she understood Him. This refusal positioned her not just as a heretic, but as a rebel against the patriarchal logic that underpinned both Church and state.

Her execution was therefore not just about theology. It was about restoring order, gendered, political, and spiritual.

Calling Joan of Arc a feminist risks anachronism. She did not advocate for women's rights, nor did she seek to dismantle patriarchy as a system. Her worldview was profoundly religious, hierarchical, and rooted in medieval cosmology.

And yet her life had feminist consequences.

Joan demonstrated that authority could come from conviction rather than gender, that leadership was not inherently masculine, and that obedience to conscience could supersede obedience to institutions. She did not argue these points theoretically; she embodied them. In doing so, she expanded the imaginable roles available to women then and now.

Later feminist thinkers would find in Joan a powerful symbol: a woman who refused silence, who trusted her inner voice, and who paid the ultimate price for defying the structures that sought to contain her.

When the Church canonized Joan in 1920, it did more than honour her, it reclaimed her. Sanctification reframed her rebellion as obedience, her defiance as submission to divine will. The radical Joan became a safe Joan: a saint, a virgin, a symbol of national unity.

Yet canonization cannot erase the discomfort she causes.

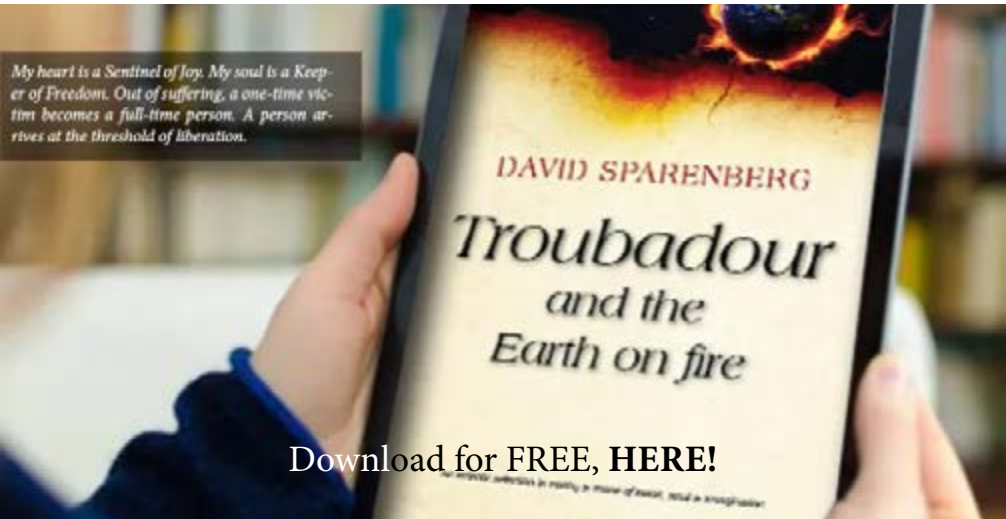
Joan was condemned by the Church and later vindicated by it. She was executed for heresy and later declared holy. This contradiction reveals less about Joan herself than about the institutions that judged her. Her life exposes how power defines orthodoxy and how easily truth can be silenced when it threatens authority.

Joan of Arc endures because she forces us to confront enduring tensions: faith versus institution, conscience versus conformity, gender versus power. She reminds us that belief can be revolutionary, that obedience can be selective, and that authority does not always come from permission.

She was not a feminist in the modern sense. She was not a liberal reformer or a secular rebel. She was something more unsettling: a young woman who believed God spoke to her and acted accordingly, regardless of the cost.

That is why Joan of Arc still burns.

Not just at the stake, but in the questions she leaves behind. ■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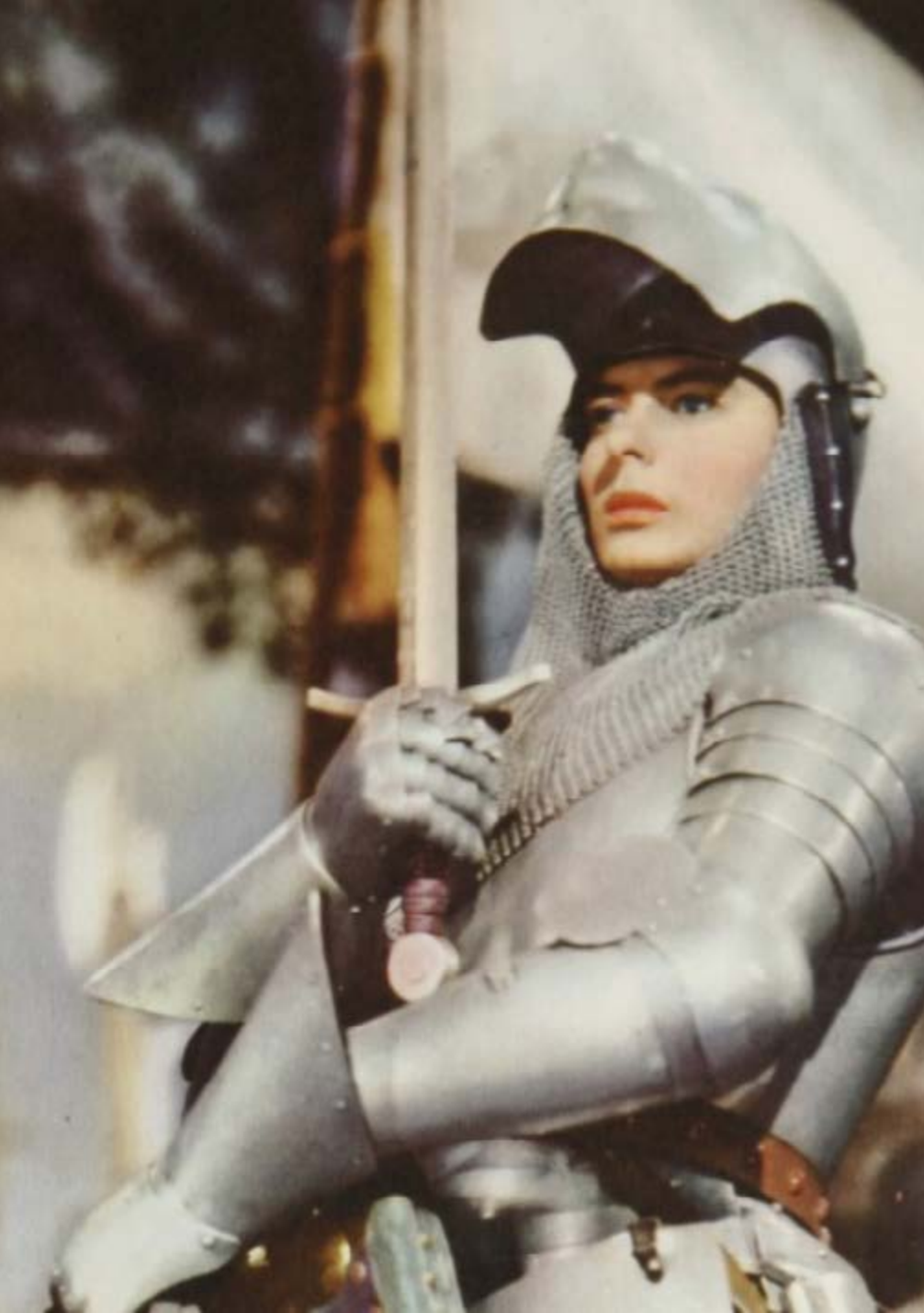


Joan on stage and screen From Shakespeare to Hollywood

Few historical figures have proven as stubbornly alive in the cultural imagination as Joan of Arc. Burned at the stake in 1431, rehabilitated by the Church twenty-five years later, canonized in 1920, Joan has never stayed put in history. Instead, she keeps reappearing, recast, reinterpreted, and repurposed on stage, on film, and eventually on television. Each era seems unable to resist reshaping her into what it most needs her to be: saint, soldier, fanatic, feminist icon, nationalist symbol, or tragic victim of power.

What makes Joan of Arc endlessly adaptable is also what makes her dangerous to portray. She was a teenage peasant who claimed divine voices, led armies, defied clerics, unsettled kings, and died refusing to recant her truth. Any attempt to depict her forces artists to confront uncomfortable questions about faith, authority, gender, and violence. As a result, Joan's journey from medieval chronicles to Shakespearean drama, silent cinema, and modern Hollywood reveals as much about the societies depicting her as it does about Joan herself.

Joan entered Western drama long before she reached the screen. Shakespeare, writing only a century and a half after her death, presents her in Henry VI, Part 1 as something close to a villain: a witch, a deceiver, and a dangerous French enemy. This Joan is clever and defiant but stripped of holiness. Shakespeare's portrayal reflects English national trauma more than historical curiosity. To rehabilitate Joan would have been to undermine England's version of the Hundred Years' War.

Later playwrights, particularly in France, worked in the opposite direction. From Voltaire's satirical La Pucelle to Schiller's romantic Die Jungfrau von Orleans, Joan oscillated between mockery and mythmaking. Schiller's Joan dies heroically on the battlefield, historically false, emotionally satisfying. Already, a pattern emerges: Joan's real death is too brutal, too politically messy, and too unresolved for comfortable storytelling.

By the time Joan reached cinema, this tension between historical fidelity and symbolic necessity had hardened into an artistic fault line.

No film has defined Joan of Arc on screen more decisively than Carl Theodor Dreyer's The Passion of Joan of Arc (1928). Silent, stark, and psychologically merciless, Dreyer's film strips away spectacle in favour of faces, especially the face of Renée Jeanne Falconetti. Her Joan is not a warrior but a believer. She trembles, doubts, prays, and endures. The camera offers no heroic distance; it presses close, forcing the audience into complicity with her suffering.

Dreyer's genius lies in what he refuses to do. He does not explain Joan's voices. He does not dramatize her victories in battle. He does not frame her as nationalist propaganda. Instead, he presents a young woman crushed between unyielding institutions: church, law, and male authority. The trial becomes the true battlefield, and Joan's weapon is conviction.

This Joan feels timeless because Dreyer avoids interpretation where others impose it. He does not tell us whether Joan is mad or divinely inspired; he asks whether it matters. Her tormentors are not caricatures but bureaucrats, men who believe utterly in their righteousness. In this sense, Dreyer's Joan is modern, even existential. She is less a saint than a mirror held up to power.

No later portrayal fully escapes Dreyer's shadow.

The mid-20th century brought a wave of Joan adaptations shaped by global upheaval. Films like Victor Fleming's Joan of Arc (1948), starring Ingrid Bergman, reintroduce pageantry and grandeur. Bergman's Joan is luminous, noble, and reassuringly sane. This is Joan as moral certainty, a beacon in a world recovering from war.

Yet this reassurance comes at a cost. Fleming's Joan is polished, dignified, and emotionally distant. The raw terror of the stake and the ambiguity of her voices fade behind orchestral swelling and heroic framing. This Joan reassures audiences that faith is pure and sacrifice meaningful, comforting ideas in a post-war, Cold War world craving clarity.

Roberto Rossellini's Joan of Arc at the Stake (1954), also starring Bergman, pushes in a stranger direction. Structured as a series of memories unfolding as Joan awaits execution, the film blends mysticism, theater, and abstraction. Rossellini's Joan is not realistic but spiritual, hovering between life and legend. It acknowledges that Joan no longer belongs fully to history, she exists in memory, ritual, and belief.

These portrayals reflect a growing reluctance to confront Joan's violence. Her military role is acknowledged but softened. Joan becomes a symbol rather than a disruptor.

Television, with its longer formats and intimacy, offered new opportunities—and new compromises. Mini-series such as Joan of Arc (1999), starring Leelee Sobieski, attempt balance: Joan as visionary, commander, and victim. Sobieski's performance emphasizes youth and vulnerability, making Joan emotionally accessible to modern audiences.

Yet television often domesticates Joan. Her radicalism is toned down, her faith translated into personal intuition rather than disruptive prophecy. The danger she posed to both Church and crown is acknowledged but rarely felt. The episodic structure favours explanation over mystery, smoothing away the unsettling contradictions that make Joan compelling.

Television Joan tends to be sympathetic, understandable, and safe. And Joan of Arc was none of these things.

Luc Besson's The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc (1999) represents the most aggressive attempt to reclaim Joan as a figure of violence and psychological instability. Milla Jovovich's Joan is ferocious, traumatized, and increasingly haunted. Battles are chaotic and brutal; faith is interrogated rather than affirmed.

Besson introduces a controversial interpretive device: a conscience figure (played by Dustin Hoffman) who questions Joan's voices, motives, and certainty. This Joan may be divinely inspired or she may be projecting guilt, rage, and grief. The film refuses to settle the question.

Critics were divided, and rightly so. Besson's Joan restores danger to the character but sometimes confuses psychological complexity with excess. The film struggles to reconcile Joan's spiritual authority with its scepticism, ultimately framing her less as martyr than as tragic casualty of her own intensity.

Still, The Messenger deserves credit for rejecting the sanitized saint. This Joan bleeds, kills, doubts, and frightens those around her. She feels closer to the historical record than many gentler portrayals.

Across stage, film, and television, Joan of Arc endures because she resists resolution. She does not fit neatly into modern categories. She was deeply religious yet politically disruptive. She rejected gender norms without articulating a gender ideology. She served a monarchy while undermining institutional authority. She was both instrument and threat.

Every portrayal reveals its era's anxieties. Dreyer feared bureaucratic cruelty. Mid-century cinema sought moral reassurance. Late-20th-century films grappled with trauma, psychology, and scepticism. Joan absorbs these concerns because her story is a crucible for belief itself.

Perhaps the most honest portrayals, Dreyer's above all, understand that Joan cannot be explained without diminishing her. She must remain partly unknowable. To portray Joan of Arc is not to solve her but to stand before her question: What do we do with those who claim truth beyond our systems?

As long as societies struggle with authority, faith, and dissent, Joan will continue to rise, from the stage, from the screen, from the fire unyielding and unresolved. ■

POVERTY
HAS NO
AGE
GENDER
COLOUR
RELIGION
POLITICS
NO MERCY

Political weaponization How the far-right in France and the US claims Joan of Arc

Few historical figures have been so persistently reinvented as Joan of Arc. Peasant girl, mystic, military commander, martyr, saint, each era has carved from her life the version it most needed. Today, however, Joan's image is being pressed into service once again, not by monarchs or the Church alone, but by far-right nationalist movements in France and the United States. In their hands, Joan of Arc has become a symbol of a besieged Christian civilization, threatened by foreigners, secularism, and cultural "degeneracy."

This modern appropriation is not merely nostalgic. It is political, strategic, and deeply selective. Joan is no longer remembered primarily as a complex medieval figure shaped by war, faith, and gender constraints, but as a mythic weapon, a rallying icon for nativist identity politics.

Historically, Joan of Arc was anything but a straightforward nationalist heroine. Born around 1412 in Domrémy, a village on the fringes of political loyalties, Joan lived during the Hundred Years' War, a dynastic conflict rather than a modern national struggle. France as a unified nation-state did not yet exist. Loyalties were fluid; alliances crossed linguistic, cultural, and territorial lines.

Joan claimed divine visions instructing her to support Charles VII against English-backed Burgundian forces. She dressed in men's clothing, defied ecclesiastical authority, and spoke with unsettling confidence to nobles and clerics alike. These transgressions—especially her gender nonconformity, were among the reasons she was condemned by an ecclesiastical court and burned at the stake in 1431.

Only later was she rehabilitated, canonized in 1920, and elevated as a symbol of French unity. Even then, interpretations varied wildly: republicans saw her as a woman of the people; Catholics as a saintly mystic; monarchists as a loyal servant of the crown.

This malleability is precisely what makes Joan of Arc so attractive to modern extremists.

In contemporary France, no party has claimed Joan more aggressively than the National Rally (Rassemblement National), formerly the National Front. Since the 1970s, Jean-Marie Le Pen and later Marine Le Pen, have made annual pilgrimages to statues of Joan of Arc on May 1st, transforming her into a symbol of ethnic purity, national sovereignty, and resistance to immigration.

For the far right, Joan represents:

- A Christian France under siege
- Resistance to "foreign occupation," now rhetorically reframed as immigration or globalization
- Moral purity opposed to multiculturalism and secular liberalism

This framing deliberately ignores inconvenient truths. Joan fought alongside mercenaries, navigated multinational armies, and

was ultimately betrayed by fellow Frenchmen. Her faith was mystical and personal, not institutional or exclusionary. Yet the National Rally presents her as a proto-nationalist defender of an eternal, homogenous France, white, Christian and culturally fixed.

Marine Le Pen has softened the party's language, but the symbolism remains intact. Joan becomes a cultural firewall, a sacred ancestor invoked to legitimize modern anxieties about Islam, migrants, and European integration.

While Joan of Arc is not a central figure in U.S. history, she has found a surprising afterlife in American far-right and Christian nationalist circles. Here, she is less a French heroine than a civilizational archetype.

In American extremist rhetoric, Joan is recast as:

- A warrior defending Christianity from "invaders"
- A woman who "knew her God-given role" while embracing righteous violence
- Proof that divine authority justifies political action

Online forums, far-right influencers, and certain militant Christian groups invoke Joan as an example of holy resistance, often stripped of her medieval context and reimagined as a defender of "Western civilization." She is sometimes paired symbolically with crusaders, Spartan warriors, or even modern gun rights iconography.

This transatlantic appropriation reveals something crucial, Joan of Arc is no longer tied to France alone. She has become a floating symbol in a global culture war, detached from history and repurposed as a mythic avatar of Christian nationalism.

Perhaps the greatest irony of Joan's far-right adoption lies in gender politics. Joan defied patriarchal norms, rejected prescribed female roles, wore armour, commanded men, and spoke publicly with religious authority, behaviours that modern far-right movements typically condemn.

To resolve this contradiction, extremists sanitize her image:

- Her independence becomes obedience to God
- Her gender nonconformity is ignored or reframed as necessity
- Her execution by Church authorities is quietly sidelined

Joan is thus transformed into a paradoxical figure: a woman celebrated by movements that often resist women's autonomy. Her complexity is flattened into moral clarity, her ambiguity erased in favour of certainty.

The resurgence of Joan of Arc as a political symbol speaks less about the Middle Ages than about the insecurities of the present. In times of demographic change, secularization, and geopolitical uncertainty, far-right movements crave symbols that promise moral purity and historical destiny.

Joan offers:

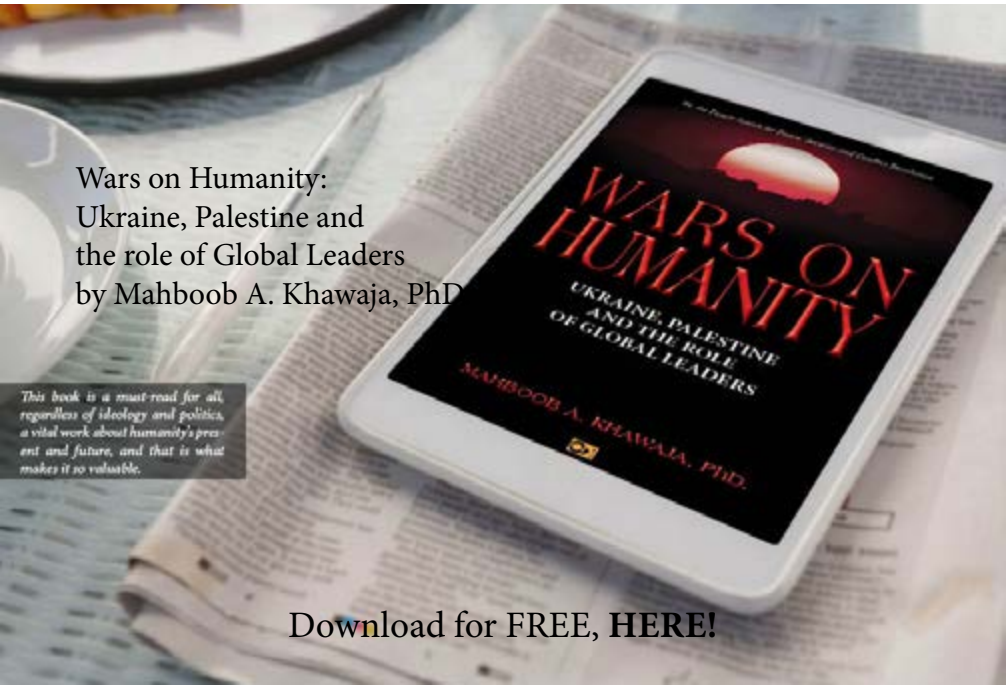
- Divine legitimacy without modern institutions
- Violence framed as defence rather than aggression
- A narrative of loss and reclamation

She allows nationalist movements to present themselves not as reactionary, but as heirs to a sacred struggle.

Joan of Arc does not belong to the far right. She does not belong to any single ideology. She was a teenage girl navigating war, faith, power, and fear in a brutal medieval world. To reduce her to a mascot for exclusionary politics is not only historically dishonest, it is intellectually lazy.

History is not a weapon rack from which we select convenient heroes. When figures like Joan of Arc are stripped of their contradictions and complexities, they become tools of propaganda rather than sources of understanding.

The real lesson of Joan's life is not one of purity or national homogeneity, but of how power, religious, political and cultural, constructs and consumes symbols. And perhaps that lesson is more urgent now than ever. ■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The MAGA Joan Decline of American values and the quest for national restoration

History has a habit of returning, not as repetition, but as metaphor. In moments of cultural anxiety, societies reach backward for figures who once seemed to cut through chaos with moral clarity. In contemporary American politics, especially within populist and nationalist movements, one can detect a recurring historical echo: the language of restoration, moral crusade, and redemptive struggle. At times, this rhetoric evokes an unlikely medieval figure, Joan of Arc. Not in name, but in function. What emerges is a symbolic figure we might call the "MAGA Joan": a secularized saint of national restoration, imagined rather than embodied, invoked to justify a political struggle framed as existential and holy.

This is not a claim that modern American political actors consciously model themselves on Joan of Arc. Rather, it is an examination of how her story simplified, mythologized, and stripped of context, mirrors the way certain movements narrate their own mission: a fallen nation, corrupted elites, divine or moral certainty, and the promise of redemption through struggle.

Joan of Arc emerged in 15th-century France during the Hundred Years' War, a conflict marked by political fragmentation, foreign occupation, and dynastic uncertainty. France was not merely losing territory; it was losing coherence. Joan's power lay not in military expertise but in symbolism. A teenage peasant girl claiming divine visions, she cut across entrenched hierarchies and embodied the idea that the nation itself rather than its feuding elites had a sacred destiny.

Importantly, Joan's story became mythic almost immediately. Her trial and execution by ecclesiastical authorities aligned with English interests transformed her into a martyr. Later canonization completed the arc: from outsider to national saint. Over centuries, Joan became a vessel into which France poured its anxieties and aspirations. Monarchists, republicans, Catholics, and even secular nationalists all claimed her, reshaping her image to fit their ideological needs.

This malleability is precisely what makes Joan so relevant as a metaphor today.

A defining feature of contemporary populist movements in the US particularly those aligned with "Make America Great Again" is the insistence on decline. America, in this telling, was once pure, strong, unified, and morally coherent. Somewhere along the way, it was betrayed: by elites, intellectuals, globalists, immigrants, cultural liberals, or shadowy institutions. The details vary, but the structure remains consistent.

This narrative does more than criticize policy. It frames politics as a moral struggle rather than a pragmatic one. Compromise becomes suspect. Opposition becomes corruption. Losses are not electoral setbacks but evidence of sabotage.

This is where the Joan parallel sharpens. Joan did not argue policy. She proclaimed truth. Her authority came not from institutions but from conviction. Likewise, modern movements often elevate figures, politicians, commentators, or symbolic "ordinary Americans" who claim authenticity over expertise, moral clarity over procedural legitimacy.

The "MAGA Joan" is not a person but a role, the righteous outsider who speaks for the "real nation" against illegitimate power.

One of the most striking similarities between Joan's myth and contemporary nationalist rhetoric is the sanctification of the nation itself. For Joan, France was not merely a political entity; it was chosen by God. To save France was a holy mission.

In modern American discourse, explicit religious language may be muted or coded, but the underlying logic persists. America is described as exceptional not just historically, but morally. Its decline is framed not simply as economic or geopolitical, but as spiritual. The loss of "values" looms larger than the loss of manufacturing jobs or global influence.

This framing has consequences. If the nation's crisis is moral, then political opponents are not just wrong, they are profane. Institutions that contradict the movement's narrative (courts, elections, media, academia) are not neutral arbiters but corrupted temples. Like the clerics who condemned Joan, they are cast as traitors to the true faith.

Joan's execution was essential to her legacy. Without martyrdom, she would likely have faded into obscurity. Suffering validated her truth.

Similarly, modern political movements often cultivate a sense of persecution. Legal scrutiny, electoral defeat, media criticism, or

social backlash are reinterpreted as evidence of righteousness. The more a figure is attacked, the more authentic they appear. Loss becomes proof of virtue.

This dynamic reinforces loyalty and insulates movements from self-critique. If every setback is sabotage, then no outcome can falsify the narrative. The movement becomes self-sealing, fueled by grievance and sustained by myth.

The problem is not reverence for history, it is the misuse of it. Joan of Arc's real story is far more complex and unsettling than her legend. She was devout but manipulated, courageous but constrained, victorious yet disposable. The same society that celebrated her burned her when she became inconvenient.

Modern movements that cast themselves in Joan-like terms often

ignore this lesson. Myth encourages certainty, but history warns of ambiguity. Nations are not saved by purity tests or moral absolutism. They are sustained by institutions, pluralism, and the difficult work of compromise.

When political identity hardens into crusade, democracy weakens. Elections become battles between good and evil. Opponents become enemies. Violence, rhetorical or real, becomes easier to justify.

At its core, the appeal of the "MAGA Joan" is emotional. It offers clarity in a confusing world, belonging in a fragmented society, and meaning in a time of rapid change. These needs are real. But history suggests that restoration myths rarely restore what they promise. They simplify the past, flatten the present, and mortgage the future.

Joan of Arc did not save France alone, nor did she usher in lasting unity. Her story became useful precisely because it could be reshaped, romanticized, and weaponized long after her death.

America today faces genuine challenges, economic inequality, cultural polarization, institutional distrust. But framing these challenges as a holy war to reclaim a lost moral Eden risks repeating history's darker patterns. Not Joan's courage, but her fate, should give us pause.

The real question, then, is not how to summon a modern Joan of Arc but how to resist the temptation to turn politics into prophecy, and nations into idols. History does not need saints. Democracies need citizens willing to live with complexity, disagreement, and the uncomfortable truth that greatness is not recovered by myth, but built slowly, imperfectly, together.

■

Jehane la Pucelle

Joan of Arc's enduring influence on military leadership and propaganda

History rarely grants a single individual the power to transcend time, ideology, and national boundaries. Joan of Arc is one such exception. A peasant girl turned military icon, mystic, martyr, and nationalist symbol, Joan's life lasted only nineteen years but her influence on military leadership, morale, and propaganda has endured for over six centuries. While her actual battlefield role was limited in duration and scope, her symbolic power has proven vast, adaptable, and remarkably resilient.

This article argues that Joan of Arc's true military legacy lies less in tactics or command and more in the realm of mythos, the psychological and ideological dimensions of warfare. She stands as an early and enduring case study in how belief, narrative, and symbolism can shape armies, legitimize authority, and mobilize nations.

Joan of Arc did not fit any established military model of her time. She was not formally trained, noble-born, or strategically educated. Yet in 1429, amid the despair of the Hundred Years' War, she entered a demoralized French military system and altered its psychological equilibrium almost overnight.

Her authority derived not from hierarchy but from conviction. Joan's claim that she was guided by divine voices gave her an unassailable certainty that proved contagious. In a medieval world where God's favour was seen as decisive in war, her presence reframed French defeats not as inevitable but as temporary spiritual trials.

Importantly, Joan did not introduce revolutionary tactics. French victories at Orléans and subsequent campaigns relied on conventional forces and commanders. What changed was belief. Soldiers fought as if victory were preordained. Commanders acted with renewed boldness. Even Charles VII, a hesitant and politically fragile king, found legitimacy through association with her divine mission.

In modern military terms, Joan functioned as a force multiplier of morale, a concept that remains central to military theory today.

Military history repeatedly demonstrates that morale can outweigh numbers, technology, and even strategy. Joan of Arc exemplifies this principle in its purest form.

Her presence transformed fear into momentum. Chroniclers de-

scribe soldiers following her into combat with an intensity bordering on religious fervour. She carried a banner rather than a sword, emphasizing her role as a symbol rather than a tactician. That choice was itself strategic, whether consciously or not: Joan became an embodiment of purpose rather than violence.

This phenomenon echoes throughout later military history. From Napoleon's understanding of morale as "three-quarters of the battle," to modern doctrines emphasizing psychological operations, Joan's impact prefigures an enduring truth: wars are fought in the mind before they are fought on the field.

Joan's success also challenges purely materialist interpretations of warfare. Her victories suggest that belief, when shared collectively, can disrupt even entrenched power structures.

If Joan's life created inspiration, her death created immortality.

Burned at the stake in 1431 after a trial designed to erase her legitimacy, Joan's execution transformed her from a military asset into a martyr-symbol. The English intended to discredit her divine claims; instead, they cemented her moral authority.

Martyrdom completed the narrative arc essential to mythmaking:

- A humble origin
- A divine calling
- Military triumph
- Betrayal
- Death for belief

This structure would later be replicated, consciously or unconsciously, in revolutionary and nationalist movements worldwide. Joan's posthumous rehabilitation and eventual canonization ensured that her image could be mobilized long after her military relevance had ended.

Once mythologized, Joan was no longer bound by historical accuracy. She became useful.

Few figures have been as ideologically flexible as Joan of Arc.

France

In France, Joan evolved into a symbol of national unity, resistance, and sovereignty. Monarchists celebrated her loyalty to the crown. Republicans reframed her as a daughter of the people who defied elites. During World War I, French propaganda depicted her urging soldiers forward, equating trench warfare with a sacred defence of the homeland.

World War II

During World War II, both the Vichy regime and the French Resistance invoked Joan, often simultaneously. Vichy emphasized her piety and obedience; the Resistance highlighted her defiance of foreign occupation. The contradiction mattered little. Joan's symbolic authority transcended consistency.

Beyond France

Joan's image also crossed borders. Nazi Germany paradoxically admired her as a symbol of ethnic purity and sacrifice, while Allied forces praised her as an icon of resistance. Her likeness appeared in posters, speeches, and morale campaigns, detached almost entirely from her historical context.

This adaptability reveals a central truth about propaganda: the most powerful symbols are those that can be reshaped without breaking.

In military leadership theory, Joan represents an archetype that continues to fascinate: the inspired outsider.

She was young, female, poor, and politically powerless, yet she commanded attention, obedience, and loyalty. Her leadership was performative, emotional, and narrative-driven rather than procedural. Modern leadership models increasingly recognize these traits, particularly in asymmetric warfare and revolutionary movements.

Figures such as:

- Revolutionary leaders
- Guerrilla commanders
- Ideological insurgents

often rely on personal myth, symbolic acts, and moral certainty rather than formal authority. Joan's example illustrates how charismatic legitimacy can override institutional weakness, an insight as relevant to modern insurgencies as it was to medieval France.

Yet Joan's enduring military myth is not without risk.

Mythologizing war can obscure its costs. Joan's image often sanitizes violence, framing conflict as sacred or inevitable. This romanticization can encourage reckless leadership, blind obedience, and the silencing of dissent, particularly when leaders claim moral or divine certainty.

History shows that figures modelled after Joan's mythos can inspire both liberation and catastrophe. The same narrative that mobilizes resistance can also justify fanaticism.

Thus, Joan's legacy forces an uncomfortable questions, when does belief empower, and when does it blind?

Joan of Arc did not revolutionize military tactics, invent new weapons, or command vast armies. Her enduring influence lies elsewhere, in the psychological, symbolic, and ideological dimensions of war.

She demonstrates that:

- Morale can reshape outcomes
- Symbols can outlast armies
- Leadership is as much narrative as command
- Propaganda draws power from myth, not accuracy

Six centuries later, Joan of Arc still marches, on banners, in speeches, and within the collective imagination of nations at war. Her armour is symbolic, her battlefield eternal.

In the end, Joan of Arc reminds us that the most decisive battles are often fought not with steel or strategy, but with belief and belief, once ignited, is almost impossible to extinguish. ■

END RACISM

Joan of Arc in global and popular culture

Few historical figures have travelled as far geographically, culturally and imaginatively as Joan of Arc. Born a peasant girl in early 15th-century France, executed as a heretic at nineteen, rehabilitated decades later, and canonized in 1920, Joan's life is rooted in a very specific medieval, Christian, and European context. And yet, six centuries on, she appears everywhere: in Japanese anime and video games, in graphic novels, on contemporary art installations, in science fiction, political propaganda, feminist manifestos, and avant-garde literature.

The question is no longer who was Joan of Arc, but what has Joan of Arc become?

This article argues that Joan's global afterlife is not an accident or a distortion of history, but a testament to her unusual symbolic flexibility. Joan survives because she is not just a saint or a soldier, she is a narrative engine, endlessly adaptable to the needs, anxieties, and fantasies of different cultures.

Historically, Joan of Arc was a contradiction even

in her own time, illiterate yet persuasive, obedient yet defiant, divinely inspired yet politically dangerous. She crossed boundaries that medieval society policed aggressively, gender, class, authority and paid for it with her life. That tension made her immediately symbolic.

By the 19th century, long before anime or video games, Joan had already become a cultural battleground. French nationalists cast her as the pure embodiment of the nation. Catholics emphasized her sainthood and obedience to God. Republicans reframed her as a proto-revolutionary who defied corrupt institutions. Feminists reclaimed her as a woman who refused prescribed roles. Each version selectively edited the historical Joan to suit its agenda.

This pattern, historical core, symbolic reinvention, is what enables her global migration today.

Perhaps the most striking evidence of Joan's global reach is her popularity in Japanese pop culture, particularly in anime, manga, and video games. To Western audiences, this can feel surprising: a medieval French Catholic saint reborn through a distinctly non-Christian, non-European lens.

The Fate franchise (especially Fate/Apocrypha and Fate/Grand Order) is the most prominent example. Here, Jeanne d'Arc appears not as a strictly historical figure but as a "Servant" a heroic spirit summoned to fight in magical wars. She wields banners as weapons, radiates holy power, and embodies ideals of sacrifice and moral clarity. Yet she is also reimagined through anime aesthetics: youthful, serene, emotionally introspective, and often detached from explicit Christian theology.

What matters in this context is not her Catholic sainthood, but her purity of conviction. Japanese storytelling traditions often val-

ue characters who act with absolute sincerity, even to the point of self-destruction. Joan fits perfectly. Her voices become less about God and more about destiny or inner truth. Her martyrdom becomes an aesthetic of beautiful sadness, a familiar theme in anime.

This is not historical accuracy, but it is cultural translation. Joan becomes a universal archetype: the righteous warrior who bears an unbearable burden.

Beyond anime, Joan appears across global gaming culture. Strategy games like Age of Empires II present her as a unit or campaign protagonist, emphasizing her military leadership. Action RPGs turn her into a combatant. Mobile games remix her endlessly, sometimes as a healer, sometimes as a dark, corrupted alter-ego.

The very act of making Joan playable is revealing. Historically, Joan was constrained, interrogated, imprisoned, and executed. In games, she is empowered. Players control her fate, rewrite her outcomes, even resurrect her. This interactive reimagining speaks to modern discomfort with her historical ending. We want to save Joan. Games allow us to do what history did not.

At the same time, these representations often strip away the messier aspects of her story: theological conflict, political manipulation, and the Church's complicity in her death. Joan becomes less controversial, more heroic, an icon polished for consumption.

This raises an uncomfortable question: does empowerment through pop culture come at the cost of historical complexity?

In Western comics and graphic novels, Joan often functions as visual shorthand for resistance. From underground feminist zines to polished graphic biographies, her armour and banner are instantly legible symbols.

Unlike anime adaptations, Western graphic narratives often foreground gender politics. Joan is portrayed as a woman navigating male violence, institutional hypocrisy, and surveillance. Her cross-dressing, central to her historical trial, becomes a lens for exploring gender nonconformity and bodily autonomy.

Here, Joan is less saint than witness. Her visions are sometimes treated ambiguously, even sceptically. What matters is not whether God spoke to her, but that power tried to silence her. This aligns with a broader modern trend: saints stripped of miracle, preserved as moral rebels.

Contemporary artists and writers have been less interested in celebrating Joan than in interrogating her. In modern art installations, she appears fragmented, abstracted, sometimes erased. Her armour becomes empty. Her face is obscured. These works ask, who gets to tell her story?

In literature, especially outside France, Joan often appears obliquely referenced rather than centered. She becomes a symbol of failed idealism, of youth consumed by ideology, of faith exploited by power. Writers use her to explore fanaticism as much as faith.

Notably, many modern works emphasize Joan's age. Nineteen is no longer romanticized; it is horrifying. This reframing reflects contemporary anxieties about radicalization, child soldiers, and the moral cost of belief systems that demand absolute obedience.

Why does Joan of Arc resonate so strongly beyond Europe?

First, she is a figure of asymmetrical power. She is small against empires, young against institutions, female in a male order. Cultures grappling with colonial histories, authoritarianism, or social rigidity find her story intuitively compelling.

Second, Joan's narrative is portable. Remove France, remove Catholicism, and the story still works: a young person claims moral authority, challenges the status quo, is used, then destroyed. This is a story told everywhere.

Third, Joan embodies moral certainty in a morally unstable world. In an age of irony and relativism, characters who believe in something absolutely, even disastrously, fascinate us. We no longer want to be Joan, but we want to understand her.

Yet there is a cost to Joan's global popularity. As she becomes everything, she risks becoming nothing in particular. Her historical specificity, her trial transcripts, her theological language, her political entanglements, can be flattened into aesthetic tropes: armour, fire, banners, innocence.

There is also the ethical question of appropriation. When Joan is removed entirely from her religious and cultural context, does she become a hollow icon? Or does reinterpretation keep her alive?

History suggests the latter. Joan has always been reinterpreted. What changes is who controls the narrative.

Joan of Arc endures not because the world agrees on who she was, but because the world disagrees productively. She is saint and soldier, victim and threat, mystic and pawn. Global and popular culture do not dilute her, they expose her fault lines.

In anime, she is purity under pressure.

In video games, she is redeemed agency.

In comics, she is gendered resistance.

In modern art, she is absence and accusation.

Joan of Arc is no longer just France's saint. She is a mirror held up to any culture asking dangerous questions about faith, power, obedience, and youth. The fact that she still burns, digitally, symbolically, imaginatively, suggests that those questions are far from settled.

And perhaps that is the truest miracle of all. ■

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The trials of Joan

Few figures in Western history have been judged as thoroughly and as contradictorily as Joan of Arc. Condemned as a heretic and burned at the stake in 1431, then posthumously exonerated in 1456, Joan's fate was decided twice by courts claiming to speak in the name of justice. These two trials, her condemnation and her nullification, stand as starkly opposed legal moments. Together, they reveal not only the fragility of medieval law but also a timeless truth, justice is inseparable from power, politics, and the moral courage to revisit past wrongs.

Joan's trials were never merely about theology or legality. They were about who had the authority to define truth.

Joan of Arc's first trial took place in Rouen under English occupation during the Hundred Years' War. Captured by Burgundian forces and sold to the English, Joan was placed on trial not as a prisoner of war but as a heretic, an intentional legal manoeuvre. Executing her as a soldier would have made her a martyr; condemning her as a heretic delegitimized both her divine claims and the French cause she symbolized.

The trial was presided over by Pierre Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais, a staunch supporter of the English crown. Although nominally an ecclesiastical court, it was politically motivated from the outset. Canon law required impartial judges, proper jurisdiction and access to legal counsel, standards systematically violated in Joan's case.

Joan, a teenage peasant girl, was denied a defence advocate. She was imprisoned in a secular English prison rather than an ecclesiastical one, guarded by soldiers who intimidated and harassed her. Threats of torture were used to extract confessions. Procedural irregularities were not incidental; they were structural.

The outcome was predetermined.

At the heart of the trial lay Joan's visions, her claim that God spoke to her through saints. Such claims were not unprecedented in medieval Christianity. What made Joan dangerous was not mysticism but effectiveness: she led armies, shifted political legitimacy,

and crowned a king.

Her cross-dressing, wearing men's clothing, became a central charge. While medieval law allowed exceptions for necessity and safety, Joan's explanations were dismissed. The court framed her obedience to divine voices as disobedience to the Church, redefining her faith as rebellion.

In May 1431, after intense pressure, Joan signed a forced abjuration. Days later, she resumed wearing men's clothing likely to protect herself in prison and was declared a "relapsed heretic," a charge that carried an automatic death sentence.

On May 30, 1431, Joan of Arc was burned alive.

Legally, the trial claimed legitimacy. Morally, it exposed law at its most compromised: procedure hollowed out by political necessity.

Twenty-four years later, the political landscape had changed. The English had lost much of France. Charles VII, whose crown Joan had helped secure, now faced an uncomfortable truth: his legitimacy rested in part on the actions of a woman officially condemned as a heretic.

At the request of Joan's family and with papal authorization, a retrial formally a nullification process was convened.

Unlike the Rouen trial, the nullification proceedings followed canonical norms. Over 100 witnesses testified, including soldiers, villagers, clergy, and former judges. Joan's character, faith, and conduct were examined in detail. For the first time, the court investigated the conduct of the judges themselves.

What emerged was a devastating portrait of judicial corruption.

Witnesses described intimidation, falsified records, and deliberate manipulation of legal procedure. The court concluded that Joan's condemnation had been achieved through "fraud, calumny, and malice." The verdict was annulled. Joan was declared innocent. Her reputation was restored.

The law, belatedly, corrected itself.

The nullification trial raises a troubling question, can justice that arrives decades late still be called justice?

Joan was dead. No legal reversal could undo the flames at Rouen. Yet the retrial mattered, not only to her memory but to the idea that law must be accountable to something beyond power. In revisiting her case, the Church implicitly admitted that legal systems are fallible and that authority does not guarantee truth.

This act of posthumous justice was radical. Medieval courts rarely acknowledged error, let alone invalidated politically charged verdicts. The retrial asserted a principle still contested today: that legality without fairness is not justice, and that unjust law must be exposed, even retroactively.

Joan's two trials illustrate two faces of law:

- Law as coercion, where procedure is weaponized to enforce political outcomes.

- Law as conscience, where institutions reflect, admit failure, and attempt repair.

Neither trial existed in a vacuum. Both were shaped by war, authority, and fear. Yet their contrast reveals that justice is not a static concept. It evolves with moral courage, historical distance, and the willingness to listen to silenced voices.

Joan herself never changed. The law did.

In this sense, Joan of Arc stands not only as a religious or national symbol, but as a legal one a reminder that courts can condemn truth as heresy and later canonize it as righteousness. Her life and death challenge every legal system, past and present, with a simple question:

Who does the law serve and who does it silence? ■

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The Informant
by Richard Stanford

Joan of Arc beyond the armour

Joan of Arc is usually remembered as a paradox wrapped in chainmail, a teenage peasant girl who heard voices, defied kings, led armies, and died at the stake. Historians debate her visions, theologians debate her sainthood, and nationalists debate her symbolism. Yet one dimension of Joan remains surprisingly underexplored: her profound rootedness in land, place, and collective destiny.

In the 21st century, an era marked by climate collapse, ecological grief, and existential uncertainty—Joan's story invites reinterpretation. What if her "voices" were not only divine commands but expressions of an intimate, almost ecological relationship with her environment? What if her mission, framed today, would not be military but planetary?

This is not an attempt to anachronistically turn Joan into a climate activist. Rather, it is an effort to read her structure of being, her connection to land, her responsiveness to non-human authority, and her willingness to sacrifice herself for a collective future, through the crises that define our age.

Joan did not emerge from a court or monastery. She came from Domrémy, a small border village surrounded by forests, rivers, and contested land. This was not an abstract homeland; it was soil you walked, fields you worked, animals you tended. Medieval peasants did not conceptualize "nature" as separate from themselves. Land was livelihood, identity, and survival.

Joan's attachment to France has often been read as proto-nationalism. But before France was a nation-state, it was a lived landscape under threat, burned fields, displaced villagers, ruined harvests. War, in Joan's childhood, was not a geopolitical abstraction but an ecological one.

Reframed ecologically, Joan's mission can be seen as a response to environmental devastation caused by human conflict. She did not fight for territory alone, but for the restoration of a livable world. In this sense, her loyalty was not to an idea of France, but to the continuity of life rooted in place.

In the 21st century, as rising seas and burning forests displace millions, Joan's fierce attachment to land feels newly legible. She

belongs to a lineage of figures for whom the loss of land is not symbolic, it is existential.

Joan's voices, those of Saint Michael, Saint Catherine, and Saint Margaret have long been the most controversial aspect of her story. Modern interpretations often oscillate between sainthood and pathology. But both frames risk flattening what the voices do in her narrative.

The voices do not offer abstract theology. They give instruction, urgency, and moral clarity. They tell her when to act, when to wait, when something is wrong. They connect her to an authority beyond human institutions.

In a contemporary ecological reading, Joan's voices can be understood metaphorically as radical attentiveness, to signals others ignore, to slow-building crises, to truths that are inconvenient or disruptive. Climate scientists, Indigenous activists, and environmental defenders today often describe a similar experience: sounding alarms that are dismissed as irrational, emotional, or extremist until catastrophe makes them undeniable.

Joan's tragedy is not that she heard voices but that no one wanted to listen.

Joan never sought personal power. She repeatedly refused noble titles, wealth, or long-term authority. Her purpose was narrowly defined, lift the siege, crown the king, restore order. Once the mission was complete, she expected to return home.

This rejection of personal gain in favour of collective survival is perhaps her most radical quality. Joan acts not for self-expression but for what philosopher Hans Jonas would later call responsibility toward the future.

In today's existential crises, climate change, biodiversity loss, technological runaway, the hardest ethical shift is moving from individual success to collective preservation. Joan embodies this shift instinctively. Her life is not a project of self-fulfilment but of service, even unto annihilation.

This makes her deeply uncomfortable for modern audiences. We admire her courage but resist her refusal of personal safety. Yet ecological action demands precisely this kind of ethical leap: acting decisively not because it benefits us now, but because it may benefit others later.

Joan was not executed simply for heresy. She was executed because she destabilized power. She bypassed clerical authority, embarrassed military elites, and revealed the fragility of established hierarchies.

Her trial was less about theology than control. Who is allowed to speak? Who is authorized to define truth? Who must be silenced to preserve order?

Environmental whistleblowers, land defenders, and climate activists today often face similar dynamics. They are dismissed as irrational, prosecuted as criminals, or reframed as threats to economic stability. Like Joan, they are accused not of being wrong but of being disruptive.

Joan's burning, in this sense, is not merely medieval cruelty. It is a recurring pattern: when systems feel threatened, they destroy the messenger.

Re-interpreting Joan of Arc ecologically does not strip her of her faith or historical specificity. Instead, it reveals why her story continues to haunt us. She stands at the intersection of land, voice, and sacrifice, three elements central to our current moment.

She reminds us that:

- Crises are first felt at the margins.
- Those who listen earliest are often dismissed.
- Collective survival may demand personal loss.
- And systems under threat prefer silence to transformation.

Joan did not save France forever. But she altered its trajectory. Likewise, no single figure will "save the planet." Yet figures like Joan, past and present, shift what becomes imaginable.

In the end, Joan of Arc may not be a saint of ecology. But she is a prophet of responsibility: one who teaches that when the land speaks, when the future is at stake, neutrality is not an option.

And listening, truly listening, may cost us everything. ■

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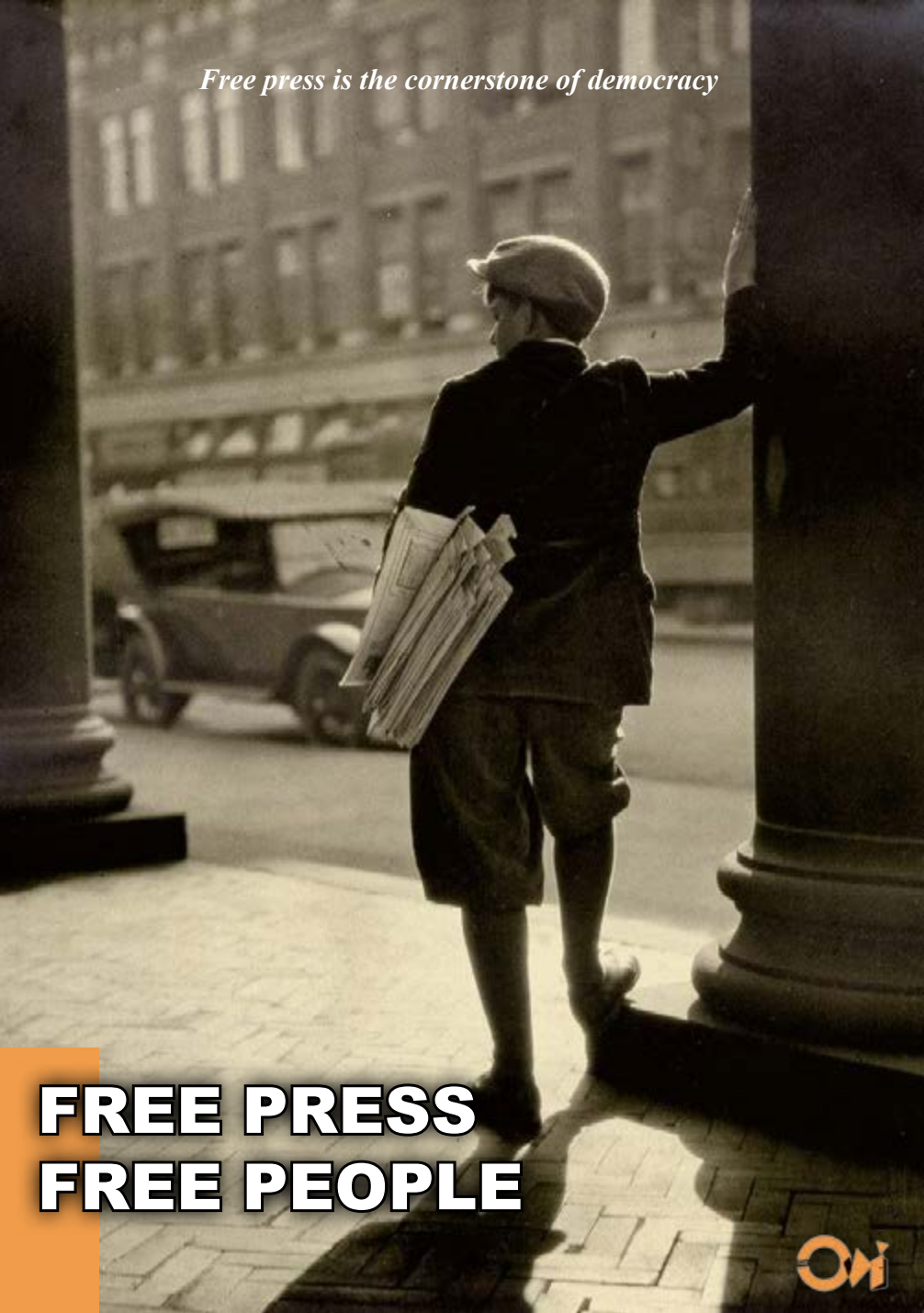
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fiction

The fire in the fields by James O. Miller

They say the land remembers. The chalky soil of the Domrémy valley, where the sheep cropped the grass and the Meuse ran slow and silver, held the imprint of a thousand peasant generations. It remembered the sigh of the plough, the tang of woodsmoke, the chill of winter fear when Burgundian wolves prowled beyond the forest's edge. But in the spring of 1429, the land began to tremble with a new memory, a rumour, carried on the wind from the east. A rumour of a girl who heard saints, who wore steel like a man, and who was coming to make France bleed for its freedom.

The day had begun with the taste of dust and dread. Word had flown ahead like a panicked sparrow: the armies were moving, cutting across the Lorraine border. The fields emptied, doors were barred, and from their cottage by the river, six-year-old Henri watched his sister, Élise, vanish into the throng of villagers heading for the ridge road. She was twelve, and had punched his arm lightly before she left. "I'll see for the both of us, little rabbit. You keep the hearth."

Now, the late afternoon sun slanted through the single window, painting the beaten earth floor in bars of gold and shadow. Henri's knees were drawn to his chin, his eyes fixed on the door latch. The air was thick with the smell of simmered turnips and his own restless anticipation.

The latch finally lifted with a scrape that made him jump. Élise stood in the doorway, not as the girl who had left that morning, but as a creature transformed. Her face was pale beneath a film of road dust, her eyes wide pools of dark, reflected fire. Her dress was grey with it.

"Élise!" Henri scrambled up. "Did you see? Was she there?"

Their mother, wiping her hands on her apron, paused by the hearth. "Well, child? Or did you just gawk at pikemen all day?"

Élise closed the door, leaning against it as if to steady the world. She looked at Henri, and a strange, solemn smile touched her lips. "I saw her."

Henri bounded forward, grabbing her skirt. "Tell! Tell everything!"

She let him pull her to the stool by the fire. Their mother handed her a cup of small beer, her own curiosity thinly veiled by practicality. Élise drank, wiped her mouth, and began, her voice low and husky from shouting and wonder.

"We waited on the high road, near the bend by the old oak," she said. "All of us, packed in the ditches. You could hear it before you saw it. Not thunder. A… a growl. The grind of cart wheels, the clank-clank-clank of a thousand harnesses, the thud of boots. It shook your teeth, Henri."

"Were the men fierce? Did they have great axes?" Henri's small hands mimicked hacking blows.

"Fierce? Some. Many were just… tired. Mud to their knees. But they walked straight. And then came the knights." Her eyes glazed, seeing it again. "On horses like great, snorting castles. Their armour wasn't shiny ...it was dull, like old ice. One carried a banner so heavy the pole bent. The wind caught it, and it unfurled… Dieu le veut! God wills it!" She shivered. "And the noise, Henri! Not just the army. The people. Women weeping, men shouting 'Salvation!' and throwing flowers that were just crushed into the mud. It was like the world was breaking open."

"But her!" Henri insisted, almost in anguish. "La Pucelle!"

Élise's gaze focused on the flames. "She came last. Before her, priests in robes, chanting, holding high a crucifix. And then… a silence fell. A patchy, coughing sort of silence. And there she was."

She paused, and the only sound was the crackle of the fire. Their mother sat slowly on the settle, her mending forgotten in her lap.

"She rides a white charger," Élise whispered, as if sharing a sacrament. "Not dainty, but strong. She sits it… not like a lord, but like a part of it. She is small. Smaller than I imagined. In armour from throat to boot, polished steel, it caught the sun in little blinding stars. A breastplate, gauntlets… all of it."

"Did she look like a man?" their mother asked, her voice tight with a century of women's work and worry.

"No." The word was definitive. "The armour can't hide it. Her face is young. Younger than Marguerite's at the mill. Her hair is dark, cut

in a bowl like a page boy's. Her cheeks are round. But her eyes…" Élise shook her head, struggling. "They didn't look at the flowers or the cheering. They looked… ahead. Towards Orleans. As if she could already see the siege lines, the English forts. As if she were looking at God's own map. There was no smile. Just… a fierceness. A certainty. It made your breath catch."

"Did she have a sword?" Henri breathed.

"At her hip. And she carried her standard herself." Élise's hands sketched the shape in the air. "A white field, sown with fleur-de-lys. The world of Christ and Our Lady, with two angels holding it… and on it, the words Jhesus Maria." She recited them with reverence. "She clutched the staff like a farmer holds his plough, a thing to be used, to work the hard earth of this war."

"Did she speak?" their mother asked.

"A captain rode too close to her, his horse skittish. She turned her head. I was near enough, the wind carried it." Élise straightened her back, and when she spoke, her child's voice took on a curious, flat, commanding tone. "Keep your distance, sir. You will not jostle the standard of the Lord." The echo of the command chilled the warm room. "The man," Élise continued, her own voice returning, "a great, bearded brute in scarred plate, reined back as if scalded. She didn't shout. She just… stated. And he obeyed."

Henri's imagination was aflame. He saw the heavenly warrior, invincible, glorious. But Élise was not finished. The light in her eyes dimmed slightly.

"Then… something happened. A bird, a lark maybe, startled from the ditch, flew right across the path of her horse. The beast shied, a sudden, clumsy jerk." Élise's hands clenched. "She was taken

unawares. She swayed in the saddle, her free hand grabbing for the pommel. For one second, Henri, just one second, she was just a girl on a too-big horse, about to fall into the churning mud like anyone else."

"Did she fall?" Henri gasped.

"No. She righted herself. Shook her head once, sharp, like a dog shaking off water. She patted the horse's neck, said something to it. But I saw her face in that moment. Not the saint. Not the general. A young girl, frightened by a bird, her cheeks flushed with sudden, mortal embarrassment. And then… she lifted her chin. She looked ahead again, and the certainty slammed back into her features, harder than before, as if she had remade herself before our very eyes. She chose to be the Maid again."

The silence in the cottage was profound. The vision was complete now, not of an icon, but of a person, terrifying in her humanity, awesome in her will.

Élise looked at her brother, whose mouth was a perfect 'o' of awe. "That's what I saw, little rabbit. An army of tired men. A world of hope. And a girl… a girl our age, who is afraid of spooked horses, but who is going to face the arrows of England because she says God told her to." She reached out and ruffled his hair, her hand trembling slightly. "She is the strangest and bravest thing I will ever see."

Their mother let out a long, slow breath. "God protect her," she murmured, but it was not a prayer of pure faith. It was laced with the grim knowledge of the world, the knowledge of what happened to girls who dared, who wore steel, who led armies. She crossed herself.

Henri crawled into his sister's lap, a rare gesture for one who fancied himself a warrior. "Will she win, Élise?"

Élise held him, her eyes on the darkening window, seeing not the familiar field but a long road leading to a burning city. “For today,” she said softly, in the cadence of Colleen McCullough’s uncompromising truth-tellers, “she won. She passed by. And everyone who saw her, even for a heartbeat, will never be the same. The land has changed. It remembers her now. That has to count for something.”

Outside, the first star pricked the violet sky over Domrémy. The ordinary night sounds resumed, the frogs in the river, the rustle of a hedgehog in the leaves. But inside the cottage, the air still vibrated with the passage of destiny. They had touched the hem of a legend, and found it stitched with ordinary thread, yet capable of catching the fire of heaven. The story was out there, marching towards its brutal, glorious, and tragic end, but here, by the hearth, it had already done its work. It had lit a fire in a young boy’s heart, and in a young girl’s eyes, it had planted a seed of unshakeable, complicated knowing: that courage was not the absence of fear, but the forging of purpose in its white-hot heart. The chapter of their witnessing was closed. Hers was still being written in blood and smoke, far away.

The End

The standard bearer's pyre by Lucas Durand

The air in Rouen that morning tasted of ash and fear. It clung to the back of the throat, a gritty promise of what was to come. I stood in the press of the crowd, my old campaigner's cloak pulled tight against a chill that had nothing to do with the May weather. They had built it high, that pile of wood around the central post, a nest for a phoenix they intended to snuff forever. I was Pierre Moreau, once of Domrémy, later of the 7th Company, the Maid's Own. I had marched from the Loire to Reims holding a banner that seemed to part the very armies of England like the Red Sea. And now I held nothing but the splintered memory of glory, waiting to watch its source burn. As the procession approached, a pathetic clanking of chains, the past rose up before me, not as a ghost, but as a trumpet blast…

The past smelled of wet wool, horse sweat, and destiny. It was the spring of 1429, and the mud of France was a sucking, clinging enemy all its own. I was twenty, strong, and sick of running. Our "army" was a shambling mob of desperate men clustered

around a boyish figure in oddly polished plate armour who kept talking about Saints Catherine and Margaret.

"She's a fanatic or a fool, this peasant girl," grumbled Gaspard, a grizzled archer from Normandy, as we chewed on stale bread. "Claims God told her to raise the siege of Orléans. As if God has time for French politics."

Then she walked among us. Not the figure from a distance, but her ...Joan. She moved with an unnerving directness, her eyes, the colour of a summer sky after a storm, missing nothing. She stopped before Gaspard.

"You doubt," she said, her voice strangely clear, neither high nor low. "Your bowstring is frayed two inches from the nock. Doubt is a frayed string. It will break when you need it most. See to it."

Gaspard gaped, his fingers instinctively flying to the exact spot she'd named. She turned to me, her gaze resting on the long, unadorned pole I carried for a standard I didn't yet have.

"You will carry it," she stated, as if reading a settled fact. "You have the shoulders for it, and the heart. Not to kill, but to show. The standard is the rallying point. It must be seen. You will keep it high, Pierre of Domrémy."

"How do you know my name? My village?"

A faint, fierce smile touched her lips. "I know. We are here to give France back her heart. Will you carry it?"

What could I say? "Yes."

The next week was not glory; it was chaos given order by a singular, terrifying will. At Orléans, the English bastille of Les Tourelles

seemed impregnable. We were failing, falling back into the stinking ditch, our assault a bloody shambles. Arrows thick as sleet. I saw Gaspard fall, his bow, string mended, still in his hand. I stumbled, the weight of the great standard—now bearing the image of Christ flanked by angels, the Oriflamme threatening to pull me into the mud. Then she was there, a splash of silver and blue in the murk. She snatched up a ladder everyone else had avoided, the arrow in her shoulder a mere detail.

"Now!" she roared, a sound that should not have come from that throat. "For God and France! To me! Pierre, now!"

I found my feet, a surge of something like lightning in my veins. I drove the butt-spike of the standard into the earth and heaved it upright, the heavy silk unfurling with a crack like thunder. The sight of that flag, and her on the ladder, ignoring the pain, was a lodestone. A roar went up from our men, not of anger, but of conversion. We took the wall. We took the day.

Afterwards, in the candlelight of a commandeered house, she sat while a surgeon dug for the arrowhead. She didn't flinch. Her eyes were on the middle distance.

"You see, Pierre?" she said softly, sweat beading on her pale forehead. "It is not about the sword. It is about the sign. You held the sign high. They saw it, and they remembered who they were."

The march to Reims for the Dauphin's coronation was our golden summer. The land itself seemed to bloom in our wake. She rode ahead, and I beside her, the standard catching the sun. We spoke of simple things, the quality of the light on the wheat, the taste of the river water. The saint was off duty; the young woman from the meadows of Lorraine was briefly present.

"Do you ever miss it?" I asked her once, daring. "The silence of the fields? The sheep?"

She looked at me, and for a fleeting moment, her face was unguarded, achingly young. "Every day," she whispered. "But the voices are in the bells here, Pierre. In the bells of Reims. We must ring them for all of France."

And we did. In the cathedral, thick with incense and hope, as Charles VII was anointed, she stood weeping with joy, her armour exchanged for a simple gown. She looked at the newly crowned king, then at her grimy, triumphant soldiers, her "beautiful brothers." Her gaze found me, holding the standard by the high altar. She gave a small, solemn nod. We did it.

But gold tarnishes. The political machinery, oiled by cynics like La Trémoille, ground her down. The king's ear grew deaf to her. At the failed assault on Paris, an arrow took her in the thigh. As I dragged her back from the moat, the standard trailing in the filth, she clutched my arm, her face contorted not with pain, but with a desperate fury.

"They will not listen! They delay and treat and bargain while France bleeds! Why can they not see?"

The capture at Compiègne was an ugly, stupid affair, a botched retreat, a portcullis slammed shut. I was not there. I heard the news like a blow to the chest. We tried to rally, to ransom her, but the will was gone. The king had his crown. The saint had served her purpose.

And now, in Rouen, the purpose was pyre.

They led her out, a slight figure in a coarse grey shift, her famous hair shorn roughly away. Her hands were bound. Two English sol-

diers shoved her towards the steps of the pyre. The crowd, mostly hostile, jeered. My heart was a drum of doom.

She stumbled, and for a second, her eyes, those impossible eyes, scanned the faces. They passed over the leering burghers, the stern clerics, the gloating English men-at-arms… and found me. At the back, an old soldier in a worn cloak. Recognition flared. Not of my name, perhaps, but of the standard-bearer, the man from the ditch at Orléans, from the road to Reims.

Her face, pale and strained, cleared. It was like watching the sun break through a tempest. She straightened her shoulders. She did not smile, but her gaze held mine, and she gave that same small, solemn nod. We did it. Then she turned and climbed the pyre without assistance.

They chained her to the post. A Dominican, his face a mask of conflicted agony, held a crucifix out to her. She kissed it fervently. The bishop read the sentence, his voice droning on about heresy and relapse. She prayed aloud, her voice steady, "Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!" A sob tore from my throat, lost in the murmuring crowd.

A soldier thrust a torch into the straw at the base. The flames caught with a hungry gasp, yellow tongues licking up the dry wood. Smoke, thick and black, billowed around her. She coughed, but her prayers never ceased.

"Rouen! Rouen!" she cried out, the name of her death-place a lament and an accusation. "I die here at your hands… I hold you to the judgment of God…"

The fire reached her. The grey robe smoked, then bloomed into orange light. The crowd fell silent, the enormity of what they were witnessing stealing even their malice. I did not look away. I owed

her that. I saw her head fall forward, and through the crackle and roar, I heard, or imagined I heard, one last word: “France.”

Then there was only the fire, and the awful smell.

They let it burn for hours, reducing the once-incandescent girl to a horror of charcoal and ash, which they then scraped into the Seine so no relic could be claimed. The crowd dispersed, strangely quiet, sated yet hollow.

I stood until the last ember died. The chill was inside me now, permanent. I was no longer young Pierre of the 7th Company. I was an old man, my great work done, my standard ash in the river.

I turned and walked away from Rouen. I walked for days, weeks, back towards the land of the Loire, towards the fields and the silence. I carried no banner now. But sometimes, in the ringing of the evening bells from a village church, or in the way the light fell across a field of wheat, I would see a flash of blue and silver, hear a clear voice saying, “You will carry it.” And I would stand a little straighter.

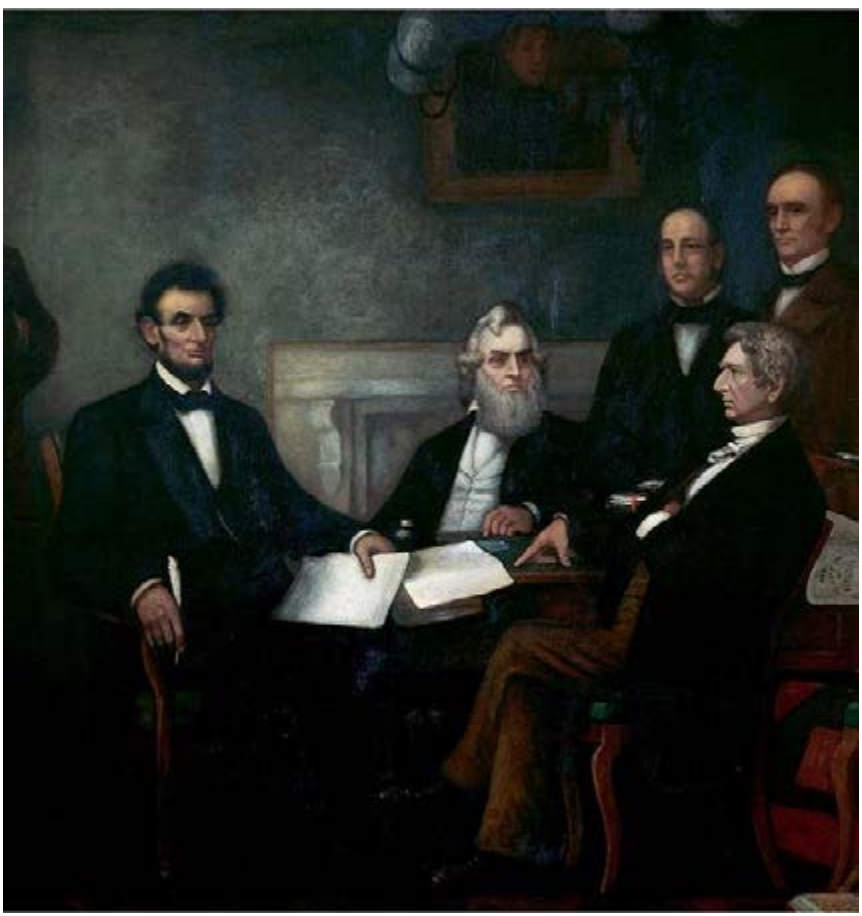
She had given a king his crown and a people their heart. For me, an old soldier, she had given a purpose that outlasted the pyre’s flames, the memory of holding something high and pure, in a time when the world was mired in mud and blood, and believing, for a glorious, fleeting season, that it could all be made clean again. The standard was gone. But the rallying point, it turned out, was not silk and wood. It was a story. And I, Pierre Moreau, would carry that.

The End

January in history

January 1, 1863
Abraham Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation

The executive order was issued by President Lincoln during the American Civil War and declared 'that all persons held as slaves' within the rebellious states 'are, and henceforth shall be free'. ■



January 6, 2021
The storming of the Capitol

In the wake of Donald Trump's election defeat to Joe Biden, supporters of the former president attacked the US Capitol Building in Washington. The riots sparked the largest criminal investigation in the US Justice Department's history. ■

January 27, 1944
The Siege of Leningrad ends

Lasting 872 days, the Siege of Leningrad was one of the longest and most destructive sieges in history. The Axis powers began their blockade of the Soviet city in September 1941 and by the time it ended in 1944, one million civilians had been killed. ■

January 30, 1948
Gandhi assassinated

The 78-year-old Gandhi, reverently called Mahatma as a sign of respect, spent much of his adult life advocating civil disobedience (satyagraha) and peaceful protests as the way for India to gain its independence from Britain, which had ruled India directly since 1858. Independence was finally declared on August 15, 1947, about a month after the British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Act, which partitioned British India into the countries of India and Pakistan. Amid growing communal violence, Gandhi traveled to New Delhi, India's capital, to take part in a fast for peace and to participate in prayer meetings. His presence on the day of his death attracted a crowd of followers estimated at between several hundred and 1,000 people.

News of Gandhi's death spread quickly throughout India, generating a sometimes violent response. In Bombay (now Mumbai), riots set fundamentalist Hindus against terrified Muslims. In New Delhi, throngs of people left their homes and businesses to mourn at Birla House. Troops were sent to maintain order. A few hours after Gandhi's death, a balcony window at Birla House was opened and Gandhi's body was carried outside and placed in a chair facing the crowd. ■

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Joan of Arc is born

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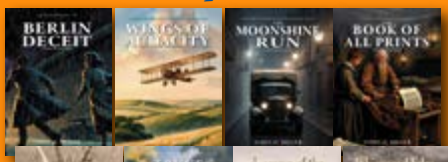

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